

ELSPETH ARMSTRONG

Attn: The Honourable Josie Osborne
Minister of Municipal Affairs

March 6, 2022

This letter is in response to the Islands Trust request for a 9 million budget, a 5% increase apparently, to conduct additional studies, hire new staff [e.g. endangered species specialists] and to expand their mandate into several new areas [marine management, housing, climate change, endangered species to name but a few]. All of which are presently overseen and dealt with in great detail by our provincial government, several federal agencies and to some extent regional districts. Begs the question – “how many people does it take to unscrew a light bulb”.

I was an elected Trustee for Gambier Island when the Trust was first formed in 1974 and subsequently held another 2 year term from '78-'80. I thought at the time that this legislation to “protect and preserve” was timely and whole heartedly supported this legislation. During the 2 years between my being a Trustee, a Vancouver mining company staked much the crown land on Gambier Island. 60% of Gambier is crown land. Given the Trusts mandate of “preserve and protect”, as a Trustee from '78-'80, I endeavoured to get the Trust to back efforts to stop the mining company from all exploration on the island. A futile effort. Response by the Chair and executive was “we do not have the power, jurisdiction, right to stop” a venture of this sort. It was made very clear that the Trust was not willing to defend their mandate to “preserve and protect. The question became – why have this mandate if the Trust was not willing to defend it?” Shortly after my term finished in 1980, myself and many others formed the Gambier Island Preservation Society. The Society subsequently sued the Islands Trust because they declined to defend their mandate to “preserve and protect”. Unfortunately we lost.

Not only does the Trust have no jurisdiction over the mining industry, they do not have any jurisdiction over Highways, Hydro, Forestry, Foreshore Use, etc. Their only claim to fame is in Land Use Planning. However, the caveat exists that all other agencies have to be informed and their views taken into consideration before a final decision is made. That remains the same today.

The question begs to be asked, “why does the provincial government keep a bureaucracy running whose only job is “land use planning” at an increasing cost to the island taxpayers? Would it not make eminent sense to have the gulf islands under the jurisdiction of their Regional Districts, thereby eliminating/duplicating research already being done by other agencies? Each Regional District would have 2 elected officials from each gulf island who now would work with the Regional District staff. These elected officials would represent their islanders' views and ideas of how they would like their island to be in terms of “land use, tourism, visitors, parks, etc. Not only that, these island elected officials would have instant communication with other stakeholders, e.g. hydro, highways, communications, forestry, environmental issues, etc, thus being able

to make quicker decisions with their constituents without having to wait until the Trust planners do all their inquiries, reporting back to the trustees to consider then once again take it to the public . A most inefficient, costly way to run any business or a government agency.

I strongly suggest and have thought for many years now, that the government take a serious, close look at this piece of inefficient, costly legislation. I believe that all the trust gulf islands would be better served having their two elected representatives working with their respective Regional Districts. A major bonus would be that each island would be able to keep their uniqueness and have plans supporting that uniqueness.

Thank you for your time,

Elspeth Armstrong
Resident, Hornby Island

Ccs: Alex Allen, Local Trustee, Islands Trust, Hornby Island
Peter Luckham, Chair, Islands Trust Council